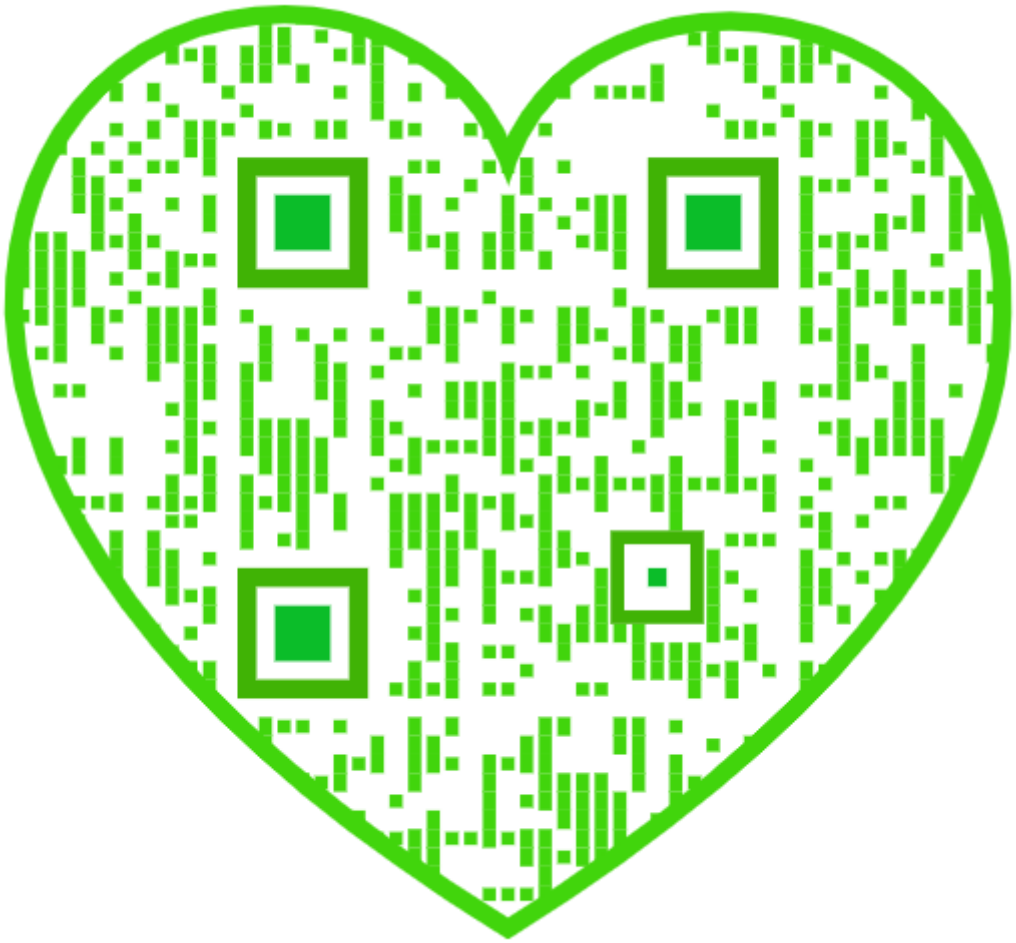

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EASY WHIST

BY

AQUARIUS;

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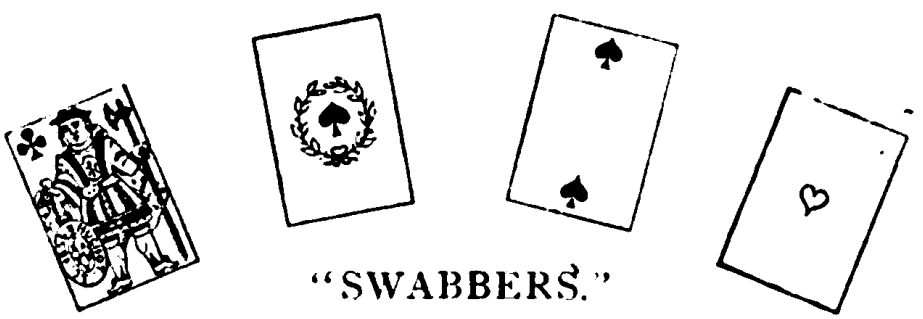
"The Hands at Whist," "Écarté," "Advanced Whist," "Games at Cards for Three Players," "Round Games," "Piquet and Cribbage."



"SWABBERS."

LONDON

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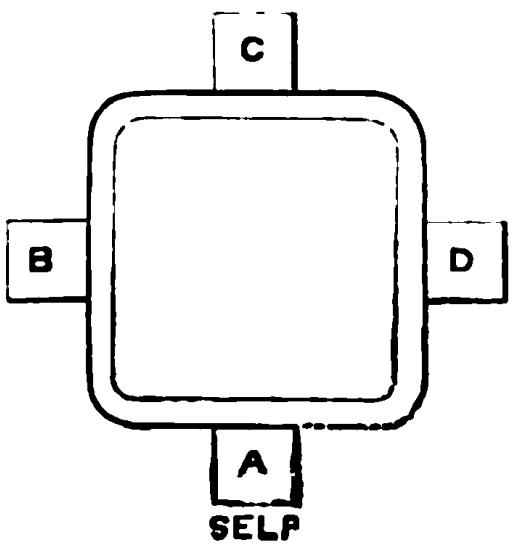

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Easy Whist.

I.—Introduction.

As there is a beginning to everything, and as among good whist-players the beginner would spoil the pleasure of the game, Beginner's Whist is usually played in the domestic circle.

In most cases family whist is entirely distinct from good whist, on account of its irrational and heedless play; yet there is no reason for so wide a difference; if well learned it should not be positively bad,

but merely an immature whist, of such a sort that further knowledge of method may render it good without unlearning. Such a style, which will be here adopted, will neither detract from its interest nor render it solemn.

Though good whist must be played in silence, in Beginners' Whist remarks on the past or on the present play (but not on the unplayed cards, or future play) may be allowed, as they conduce to a detailed knowledge of procedure, aim and method, thus helping the learners very materially, and keeping matters more lively.*

* The game Whist was not silent until "Swabbers" were abolished, and the odd trick introduced.

II.—The Cards.

As there are fifty-two cards, of which thirteen are in each suit—namely, diamonds, hearts, spades, and clubs, and as there are four players, each player will, after the cards are dealt round, singly hold thirteen cards; or each party, or pair of partners sitting opposite to each other, will hold twenty-six cards.

The last, or fifty-second card, belongs to the dealer, but is laid on the table, face upwards, during the first trick, and indicates that its suit is the trump suit: thus if it be the five of clubs, all clubs are trumps during the out-play.

Trumps are superior to any cards of

common suits. The order of cards in value is thus:—Ace highest; next the court-cards, king, queen and knave; then plain cards, ten, nine, eight, &c., down to the two, the lowest. The ace and three court-cards of the trump-suit are termed honours. Commanding card is a term for highest card yet unplayed in any suit.

III.—The Deal.

The first dealer is chosen by consent, chance, or by cutting a pack; the next deal is taken by the player on his left, and the subsequent deals pass on towards the left. There is thus a fresh trump card, and perhaps a fresh trump suit, at each deal. (But in the Permanent Trump Game

the trump suit of the first deal holds permanently without change, either until the whole game, or until a rubber of three games is scored, independently of the deals.)

IV.—The Out-play.

In the out-play, the earlier player, or elder hand, sitting on the dealer's left, leads a card for the first trick, thus making an original lead; the next player on his left then follows with a card of the same suit, and the play goes round to the left, till four cards are played, forming a trick.

The suit led must be adhered to by all the players; but should any one of them

renounce—that is, not hold a card of that suit, he may either discard from any other common suit, or may play a trump; in the former case he loses, in the latter he may win the trick.

The trick is won by the highest player in the suit led, or in trumps; it is collected and placed apart. The succeeding tricks are played in the same way, the winner of each trick leading in the trick following. The tricks won by each party are piled separately, and counted at the end of the out-play. They may then be examined to prove any revoke or false renounce; and the score for the out-play is made.

V.—The Score.

Having taken the penalties or points on account of any proved revokes, the score is estimated for tricks, and lastly for honours.

Each trick won in excess of six counts for one point, and each honour held in excess of those in the hands of the opposite party counts as one point. Any revoke prevents the party making it from scoring a complete game, and each revoke involves the penalty of a loss of three tricks handed over, or of three points.

The game consists of five points scored; in long whist ten points.

Minor details, as regards laws, &c.,

are usually neglected in Beginners' Whist, or are settled by reference to a bystander.

VI.—Adjustment of Error.

1. The penalty for a misdeal is the loss of the deal; but if one complete trick be played, a misdeal cannot be declared. Every player must accept the consequences of playing with an incorrect hand.

2. A card played out of turn, either as a trick-lead, or in play, must be withdrawn; it can be then treated as an exposed card.

3. A card played so as to constitute a revoke, may be withdrawn before the first card of the next trick is played; it is then merely a withdrawn revoke, and counts merely as an exposed card.

4. A player can withdraw any card he plays before it is covered or played to by the next player; he may ask the players to draw their own cards in the current trick, and he may see the last trick.

5. The dealer must answer at any time the inquiry, Which is the trump suit?

6. A throw-down of a hand or hands, is irrevocable exposure, and the cards of it must be played according to the naming of the opponents in open play.

VII.—The Object of the Play.

In Beginners' Whist, more than a very slight knowledge of the hand of your partner, or of your opponents, cannot be assumed; but this small amount must be utilized, and

the most must be made of your own hand with respect to the object. (In good whist you play up to the full knowledge possible of all the hands, and make the most of the combined hands of self and partner.)

The first point is to consider your own hand, the next, the object in playing it. This may be simply expressed as one or other of the two following :—

1. To win the early odd trick, without risk.
2. To win as many tricks as possible.

The play is different in each case, for in the first you have merely to win seven tricks, and these as quickly as possible ; in the other case, you may win more—as many

as thirteen, and it matters not whether they are made early or late in the out-play.

The former game may be compulsory, even among good players, when the opponent's score is already four out of the five points for the game. It is also compulsory for you in Beginners' Whist, when neither you nor your partner can carry out the principles and methods necessary for object No. 2.

If, however, either of you can carry these out, the inferior player of the two should not attempt the former game, but should countenance his partner in attempting the latter, by playing his own hand to the best advantage; although the independent play of his own solitary hand goes only

halfway towards actual support. This is the most usual state of things in Beginners' Whist. Before proceeding to the explanation of the methods in playing your own hand (in Sections VIII., IX., X. following), we will briefly explain the childishly easy game of playing for the *early* odd trick.

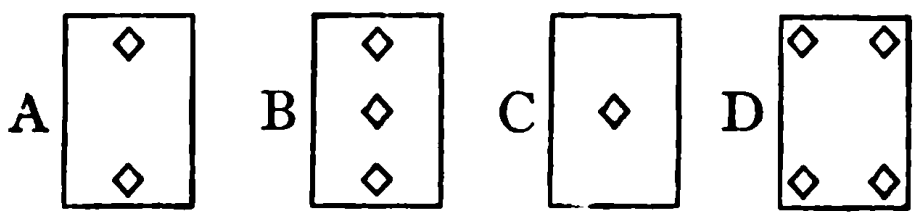
In this, all the suits, including the trump suit, are played in very much the same way; but the party whose score is low plays out trumps earlier than they otherwise would. The commanding cards in each suit, court-cards and high cards, are played out early without reserve and with little risk. If there are enough of these to win seven tricks, the losing cards fall to

the opponent's good cards in the remaining six tricks. The odd trick being scored, the game is saved.

Winning the game is another thing; it requires careful play, unless your hands are very strong. This will be here demonstrated in a trick, in a common suit, and in the trump suit, in the briefest manner possible, on the natural basis of economic procedure.

VIII.—The Simple Trick.

If a trick be thus played in diamonds—



as you, A, lead the two, and your

partner, C, wins the trick with the ace, it is so far well that it is won by your side, and that your opponents have not trumped it.

Yet it is not an economic trick, because the ace of your side has merely taken the opponent's four, achieving that which might possibly have been effected by a five. Notwithstanding this, each player may have done his best under the actual conditions.

Your lead, a two, may be very good, from its economy to your own hand. A lead, when not a winning lead, is an unfavourable position for a card; it may be beaten by either of your two opponents, and every point thus thrown away would be wasted.

B plays a three, as second player, because it is judicious to play low, and he may expect his partner, D, to control the trick; the three is also effective as a covering card in beating your two.

C's ace may or may not be judicious, according to his strength in his remaining diamonds. It is true that a third player should usually play high, so as to win the trick, if possible, for he knows that D has the opportunity, and may have enough strength to beat him. But if C holds the queen he should have played it, because the chances are two to one against the king being with D—a risk he should be willing to incur. Provided the queen succeeds, his ace would then be a certain

winning card in the second round of the same suit, when he could lead it.

D, as fourth player, cannot beat the third player's ace in the first trick; he hence rejects his lowest card in the suit, and so far acts economically. But if C had played any other card, which could have been beaten by D, D would take the trick; such being then true economy for the fourth player.

The analysis of the trick shows the usual play of the successive players; it also explains that, although your side has won the trick, it has not necessarily been played entirely to the best advantage. It hence becomes needful to treat the management of the whole suit as more important than

that of the single trick. That is to say, the play must be directed so as to win as many tricks as possible in each suit, independently of the order in which they are won.

IX.—The Common Suit.

There may be three complete tricks in any suit and one card over; or, should there be one or two renounces in it, there will be two or three cards over. The distribution among the players of length or shortness in it may vary in position. *Length* consists in four or more cards, even up to six or seven; beyond that, anything up to thirteen is termed excessive length. Shortness consists in three or less cards,

down to none. It is evident that some one player must have a long hand in some suit. Even two players may each hold four cards (and possibly, but rarely, three players); the rest must hold short hands in that suit, if any. To show the effect of length of suit, in the following example let hearts go three times round, while you, A, originally held five of them.

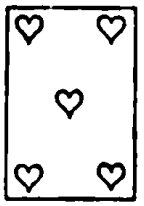
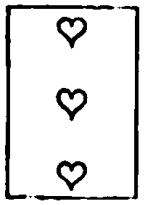
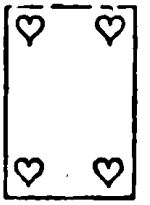
Let the hands be thus—

A, ace, queen, ten, five, two.
B, seven, six, three.
C, king, nine.
D, knave, eight, four.

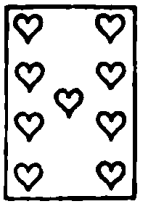
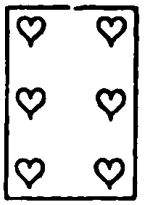
And suppose also that trump power happens to lie with A and with D.

Let the play be thus—

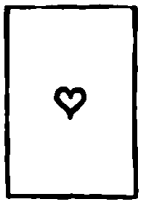
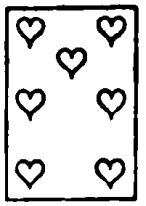
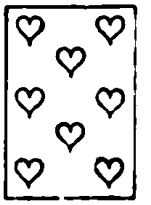
First Round.

A  B  C D 

Second Round.

C  D A B 

Third Round.

A  B  C discards. D 

Here you, A, and your partner, C, have together won three tricks in the suit, and you retain two extra cards, the ten and the two.

Fortunately for your side, the renounce in the third round was from C, your part-

ner, who merely discarded, thus improving his own hand without loss. Had the renounce been with B, as he is by assumption weak in trumps, he would have trumped in the third round and won the third trick. But if the renounce had been with D, as he is by assumption strong in trumps, he would have discarded.

Now as to your two remaining hearts, and the way they may be used, either in winning tricks or in assisting your play, so that they may not be wasted or played as rejected cards of no value.

To establish them in winning two tricks with certainty, two conditions are needful; that the holder has the lead, and that these cards may be free from being

trumped. Next to utilize them in play—that is, in forcing trumps from D's strong hand in trumps; to do this, B's trumps must have been first expended, and the result of it is to shorten and weaken D's trumps. Also, if D's last trump, better than yours, be thus drawn, your own last trump cannot be beaten, which might otherwise be the case; besides this, you would thus obtain the first lead after trumps have been entirely expended, enabling any other winning cards you have to make tricks.

Without trumps being partially expended, your two hearts might fall to B's trumps, thus doing the best possible for him.

Without the lead for your two hearts they must fall by way of discard. If the conditions be changed: for instance, let us suppose that the two remaining hearts be thus placed—the ten in your own hand, and the two in some other hand. If the two be in your partner's hand, he might lead it to you when trumps are out, and you would win a trick with the ten: but if the two were in an opponent's hand, he would take the first opportunity of discarding it; so that it could not form a lead to your ten.

Strength.—The eight being the average card of a suit, the following would be an average hand as regards strength—

In a three-card suit .	Queen, eight, four.
In a four-card suit .	King, ten, six, three.
In a five-card suit .	Ace, knave, eight, five, two.

Though total strength in a common suit means anything above these averages, yet, as in each trick the struggle is generally merely between two players out of the four, and as the cards above the eight tell most in the three rounds of a suit, the superiority of these to the average is the most important part of total strength. Hence the comparative strength in the small cards is usually neglected in estimating strength.

There is also a strength of another sort, due to the grouping of the cards held. For instance: a sequence of queen,

knave, ten, is not only superior to queen, knave, nine, from direct higher value, but on account of the sequence extending further, and affording greater clear command. A sequence may consist of any number of cards; when it is of only two cards together, it is termed a couple, or two guarded cards.

The grouping next inferior to a sequence is tenace-grouping; in which any two cards held have a gap of one card, held elsewhere. Command in a tenace, which consists in getting the opportunity of using the lower card, at a favourable risk against the intermediate one, or without any fear of it, is the result of playing it third or fourth in hand.

A head-sequence, head-couple, or a head-tenace includes the ace of the suit. An upper sequence, upper couple, or upper tenace includes one court-card, and is in the upper half of the suit. Lower sequences, &c., may be usually disregarded.

The elements and the effects of length and of strength in a suit being known; the term *power* must be understood as an expression used for combined length and strength occurring in the same suit.

Original Leads.—It is accepted as a general rule that, having either a powerful suit of four or more cards, or a merely long suit of five or more cards, in your own hand, you should lead originally from this suit. But if you have merely a long

suit of four cards, that is constructively weak, you should use your discretion as to preferring a short suit of three cards for original lead.

The following are the conventional modes of leading originally :—

In your own	*Lead*
Powerful suit of four cards .	The lowest.
Powerful suit of five or more cards	The lowest but one.
Excessively powerful suit of five or more cards . .	A winning lead and change suit.
Long suit of five weak cards or more	The lowest but one.
Long suit of four weak cards	An intermediate card.
Short suit of three cards .	The highest.
Other shorter suits . . .	Avoid the suit, excepting for a through lead.

When leading from a sequence:

In a head sequence.	.	Lead its lowest.
In an upper sequence	.	,, its highest.
With a lower sequence	.	Ignore this sequence.

In any doubt choose the leading card according as it may support your object, or probably best mode of playing out the suit. Never use book-rules for choice of card to lead, but act on principles known to you that you can carry through.

The conventional original leads inform your partner about the state of your hand. (You inform him so that you may not have three players against you.) Correspondingly, you judge his hand from his original lead, as well as from his subsequent play. The same method informs you about your opponents' hands.

Watching the progressive play of the cards, you learn where power in each suit is likely to be, and where commanding cards may lie.

In return of lead and in play generally, you can help your partner's hand by playing out your highest cards in his powerful suit; he will do the same for your powerful suit. But in your opponents' powerful suits you retain any commanding cards you have until you can make with them, or obstruct with them effectively.

In your partner's short suits you lead for him to trump tricks, only when you yourself are strong in trumps; he acts correspondingly, so that the friendly strong

trump hand may not be forced and spoilt.

Endeavour to win the third trick in any common suit, or the second before trumps are out, so that you may on change of suit choose the suit and place the following lead to your partner's advantage or to your own.

The failure of your attempts is not a proof of bad play, for these may have then been the best possible.

The Deferred Third Suit.—The three common suits may usually be treated in the same way, but there is one exception—the Deferred Third Suit. When the third common suit is not led until the eighth trick, or later, it is *Deferred*, and the play in it is special play.

The details of this special play will be treated in "Advanced Whist;" for the present, assume broadly that it is play *ad libitum*, that the leads and returns are independent of length and strength in the suit, but are subservient to the general run of the whole game, apart from rule. Such a suit must not be confounded with an ordinary third suit. The difference is most marked when trumps are nearly played out before it is led.

X.—The Trump Suit.

As the results of economic or careful play in a common suit may be swept away by hostile trumps, but saving in he trump-suit itself must be effective,

there is some reserve in leading out trumps. Not only that, but leading out trumps is conventionally leading them through; not stopping after a round or two.

You lead out trumps to establish your own or your partner's powerful suit, to bring in safely any winning cards in common suits, or to prevent your opponents' ruff. If you have but little to establish, you might help your opponents more than your own side by clearing the field of trumps.

Provided such conditions were equally balanced, you would lead out trumps only when sufficiently powerful to be sure of making at least two tricks in them; that

is, when holding either five trumps, of which one is an honour, or four trumps, of which two are honours.

If your partner depends on your trumps, or on your lead in trumps, he shows it by leading originally a winning card and changing suit immediately to another common suit.

If he himself holds trumps above the average he shows it—

1. By forcing you, or leading for you to trump.

2. By discarding in a common trick instead of trumping it.

If he wants trumps led to him, he shows it—

1. By taking a trick with the highest

card of a sequence, instead of with the lowest.

2. By rejecting a needlessly high card as a losing card.

3. By the ordinary signal for trumps, complete.

This signal consists in rejecting a needlessly high card in any common trick, following it in the next round of the same suit by the rejection of a lower one. See example on page 23, where D rejects a knave in the second round, and an eight in the third round. But a simple covering card in the second round is not necessarily a signal; hence note the distinction.

Leading out a single trump is good

play, as by continuing trumps your partner will draw two hostile trumps for each one of his own.

The card led in trumps is generally a low one from a strong hand, and a high one from a weak hand.

If moderately strong in trumps, holding not less than a four-card average suit, you may utilize your partner's weak trump-hand by leading his weak common suit for him to trump, before leading out trumps.

The return to a lead in trumps must be immediate; every occasion for continuing them must be seized, until the mass of trumps is cleared; this may require either two or three rounds.

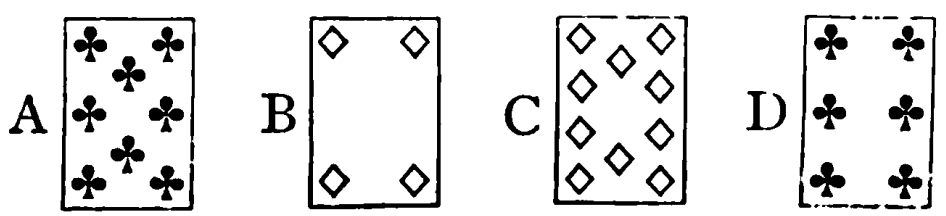
The long trumps are combated in duel; and are either beaten out or forced out by playing winning cards in other suits. Commanding trumps are retained as long as may be convenient, so as to control any hostile losing trumps, and to control hostile winning cards of common suits. Losing trumps, which are liable to be beaten, are played out whenever there is a fair chance of making a trick with them.

The Finish, consisting of the last three or four tricks of the out-play, and of the extra and withheld cards of all suits, requires a knowledge of where all these cards are, or are likely to be, and a management nearly special to each case. The requisite knowledge is the result of

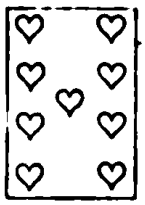
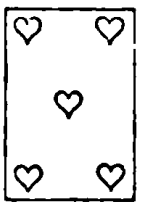
watching all cards played in the whole game, and remembering the number of cards remaining in each suit, the values of all remaining trumps, and of all common cards higher than the eight, at each round.

The following is an example of a Winning Finish. Here clubs are trumps; the tenth trick has already been won by yourself, A, and the hands remaining can be seen from the example, hearts being your own original long suit, and diamonds your partner's powerful suit.

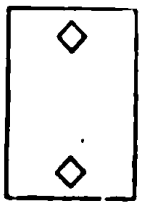
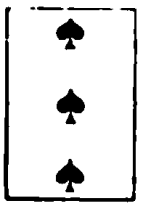
Eleventh Trick.



Twelfth Trick.

A  B  C D

Thirteenth Trick.

A  B  C D

The next step, after being able to play out one's hand fairly, is to play so as to support or control the other hands; at the same time, it is necessary also to acquire the art of "learning the hands," by drawing successive inferences as to the probable position of the cards.

XI.—Inferences from Play.

The following small list of preliminary inferences from ordinary general play may be then useful :—

First Player.	*Inference as to his hand.*
The lead of suit is either . . .	An original lead (to be returned), or a through lead (to be avoided).
1. In original suit .	The card shows power held (see p. 30).
2. A king or queen led	Is either lowest of a head-sequence, or highest of an upper sequence.
Second Player.	
1. Plays a plain card	It is his lowest; or a cover.
2. Plays a court card	It is a single card, or he has higher, or it is a covering card.
Third Player.	
1. Plays a plain card	It is either his best to win with, or a mere despairing rejection.

2. Plays a court-card	It is his lowest winning card, or the lower of the winning tenace.

Fourth Player.

1. Plays a winning card	It is his lowest winning card.
2. Plays a losing card	It is a despairing rejection.

Any player at a first renounce.

st discard . .	He holds either a long trump hand, or has no trumps, or a single one. The discard is the lowest card in his weakest suit.
2. Trump played .	He holds only three or less trumps; his lowest, if free from over trump; any trump, if fearing over trump.

For evidence of length in trumps, see "Leads" p. 37.

For evidence of power in common suit, see "Leads," p. 30.

XII.—General Remarks.

COMFORT AT WHIST.

If Whist of any sort is to be enjoyed as an agreeable amusement, the personal convenience of the players should be studied. Granting that the four players are fairly matched, the surroundings should also be suitable. First, the cards themselves. It will be admitted by every one that our ordinary cards are needlessly hideous, and that their usual proportions, $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, give a breadth inconvenient in handling, especially to players with small hands; all the ingenuity of the card-maker has hitherto been expended in ornamental backs to these things.

Narrower cards, of a size $4\frac{1}{4}$ inches by $2\frac{1}{8}$, or perhaps $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches by $2\frac{1}{4}$, would be better, as length is not inconvenient in any way; these proportions would enable the court-cards to have undistorted figures. There is no need for a hard line framing the figures on the court-cards; the backs should be plain, of one single colour or tint, and the thickness should be moderate. With double-headed cards, the line of division should start from one-third of the length at each side. The quality of cards should not be judged by their backs; a tendency to split, tear or turn up at the corners is decidedly objectionable; cards that stick or do not slide easily in shuffling are bad.

As to markers, there are many sorts. The worst are those most liable to accidental derangement. Cavendish's card slides are good. The safest plan is writing on a plain piece of card, and keeping both your own and your opponents' score.

Next, as to the table. The ordinary closing Whist-table is nearly perfect in size, height and form; but the folding-leaf should be secured so as to be free from jolt. Any legs to card tables are troublesome; four firm legs or a central support have their own advantages.

Last, as regards personal comfort. During enforced leisure, while travelling or in distant countries, comfort may be impossible; but in England, Whist is

most played during the cold and rainy seasons, and in the evening. The conditions of lighting and heating are then important. The extreme of badness is arrived at in the whist-rooms of one or two London clubs. A chilly floor, a smoky fire just lighted, a miserable room where gas-burning has already consumed all the good air, leaving you its refuse to breathe ; these conditions may affect, first your clearness of head, and your play, and afterwards cause you to reel from the room, and find yourself next day oppressed with a headache or a severe cold of a fortnight's visitation. Do not court such circumstances.

The conditions of good play also include cheerfulness ; hence, if young Lickspit

should invite you to dine and have a rubber at the Old Fogies' Club, learn whether its regulations and customs include depreciatory treatment of guests, disabilities and segregation, stare, scowl and grunt, open remarks about strangers, or attempts to patronize. If they do, avoid the Old Fogies, for you would probably not find it cheerful. You will play better at the Dashers' Club, where discourtesy has not been codified, and bad manners are rare, though guinea points are not; at the bachelor's snuggery of your friend, Jack Easy; or in Mrs. Homely's temporized card-room after a little family tea.

THE END.